

Our Sisters in Darkest Africa

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I am sure you will rejoice with us when I tell you that on Sunday last seven of our young people were baptized here in the lake, professing their faith in God and their desire to follow Jesus.

Of the seven is Amba Bonkania. She is the daughter of one of the chiefs of Ikoko, and came to us four and one-half years ago, engaged to remain six years in our care. She then knew nothing of God and His love, and was full of heathen superstition and sinful ways. Of "letters" she had never heard, but during her stay with us she has passed from darkness to light, and from heathen, sinful ways she has turned to walk with Jesus. She can now read fluently anything in her own or in the Bobangi tongue, and she can tell plainly to her own people the story of her change of heart and of the Savior sent from God to deliver them from sin.

Her tale of what she saw in the old days is awful. Men and women have in her presence been cruelly tied, killed and eaten, to honor the funeral of some big man. Others were speared, stabbed or hung at funerals, or for witchcraft. No wonder she says she lived in darkness till after her father gave her to us. She professed conversion early last year. About the same time her father was taken ill and died. During his last sickness he sent for us, and handed his daughter over to our care without reserve. Her mother was already dead, and he did not wish her brother to have charge of her, knowing that he would only have tried to make money by her.

She has done well at school, and at her recent written examination in Luke's Gospel she had 76 and 96 per cent. Last Sunday she told publicly her reasons for asking to be baptized, and appealed to all to turn from darkness and sin to Jesus the Savior.

Biati, a young mother, also of the seven, has had a similar experience. One of her stories is of several people buried alive with their heads above ground, who for days appealed to a fiendish crowd for water and for mercy. Their torment was long, but at last death came. Her husband has written her story in my book, and it is a fearful illustration of the fact that "God gave them up". To read it is to learn that heathenism cannot be too darkly painted.

Bilepe is another of the seven, and she is also a young mother. She was a very hard case. She used to follow her husband to his work, trying to provoke him to fight with her. I have seen her cry because she could not anger him and get him to reply. I nearly cried to-night when she came to my room with forty brass rods (say 40 cents), and when I asked her what it was for, she said: "The money is for God." You can understand what that means to her, when I tell you that her husband's income is 27 1-2 cents per week. He is engaged by me in carpentry, and preaches on Saturdays and Sundays in outlying villages, and in evening services during the week.

Of the seven baptized, five are from our highest class in school, these two young mothers not having come to school till after their marriage, are struggling along in a much lower class, trying to learn to read the message of God. Your school has at least been the means of enabling us to teach those young people, and it has been greatly instrumental in bringing them into the light. Two of the young men spoke before the baptismal service and told of old sins now given up for Jesus and of the determination to walk with Him and by His strength. At the evening service the other two did the same, and all gave clear testimony regarding the uni-

versal need for conversion. I would you had seen the crowd on the beach. Near to me and those about to be baptized, our girls (over forty) in their white dresses formed a rough semicircle, and near them were our school boys, also nicely dressed. Behind them on the sloping beach was a crowd of raw heathen, dirty and ugly. Sin and degradation were stamped on their faces, and there was no need for anyone to say these have been cannihals. The contrast was very striking and very cheerful. All these young people looking so bright and intelligent would have been the same as the crowd behind but for your mission station here, and though many of them have not professed conversion, yet in almost every case there is definite turning from the heathen ways of their friends, and in many there is a decided leaning to the good and true.

Then another thought came. These heathen are very vile in word and act, they are full of cruelty and rejoice at every chance of doing an evil thing. Yet for them Jesus died. And I could not but think of the two companies, followers of the Lamb and the followers of the serpent. The great white throne and the day of final division also came to my mind. It seems hard that we are so weak and can do so little to compel these people to come into the kingdom of love and of God. Here they are before us, visibly in the grasp of Satan and quite satisfied to go on in it. This day I spoke for some time earnestly to one who has heard the gospel hundreds of times. I told him of God's message and of the day of judgment. When I finished, he calmly asked, "Is your canoe going to Botunu to-day?" The sound had passed away.

We will have a number of good teachers among our senior boys and girls. There will be nearly twenty who may be called upon to take classes in reading, writing and arithmetic, up to, and including, long division. Some teach daily and others are called on occasionally to take classes. Miss Lena and I were both absent about a month, and Mrs. Clark kept all the classes go-

ing. She has all in turn for writing and dictation on the end veranda of our dwelling house, and Vinda, with other native teachers trained here, kept all the classes in the school going smoothly and well. Quite a number kept excellent order in their classes and good progress is made.

Bolumbu is a girl of thirteen or fourteen years. She came to live with a married sister just outside our mission compound, and became interested in our school. But, as she brought no money to her sister, she scolded her, and tried to force her to go out at night with young men who went to the house and asked for her. She would probably have received money enough from each to buy at least food for one day. On other nights her sister took her and led her to the house of a young man whose wife was some time dead, and left her with him. She finally came and pleaded to be taken among our girls for a term of years, as, owing to her refusal to comply with the wishes of her sister, she was to be sent away to the country behind us, where she could have no protection.

Here also is Mboyo. She was to be sold to cannibal people because she refused to live a life of sin with a man in prime of life. She is possibly eleven years of age. She is now secure (D.V.) for six years.

After reading of these two girls, do you wonder at me spending my own money on them to keep them here all the year? But I am going home, and cannot be sure if I will be able to pay for the support of these eight or nine girls, or to make up what is lacking when your appropriation is finished.

May our gracious heavenly Father bless you in the work you are doing for Him.

WOMAN'S BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

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